

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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R 290332Z DEC 76
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3187
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
USMISSION GENEVA
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 14935

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR SREF VS HK TW
SUBJECT: EVACUATION OF HONG KONG RESIDENTS FROM SAIGON

REF: HONG KONG 14731

1. HONG KONG GOVERNMENT CHARTERED FLIGHTS FROM SAIGON TO HONG KONG ARRIVED ON DECEMBER 21 AND 22 BRINGING A TOTAL OF 297 EVACUEES TO HONG KONG. EVACUEES MAINLY CONSISTED OF HK TRAVEL DOCUMENT HOLDERS, THEIR DEPENDENTS, AND A FEW BRITISH SUBJECTS. FIRST FLIGHT CARRIED 177 INCLUDING MANY "BABES IN ARMS" WHILE SECOND FLIGHT WITH 120 WAS ONLY PARTLY FILLED.

2. BY NOT FILLING SECOND FLIGHT VIETNAMESE APPARENTLY HOPED TO PERSUADE HK OFFICIALS TO FILL OPEN SEATS WITH A NUMBER OF NON-HK RELATED PERSONS WHOM THE VIETNAMESE WANTED OUT OF THE COUNTRY. HK IMMIGRATION OFFICERS BELIEVED THIS GROUP
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WAS MOSTLY MADE UP OF CHINESE WITH TAIWAN PASSPORTS WITHOUT TAIWAN ENTRY VISAS WHO WOULD HAVE ENDED UP STRANDED IN HONG KONG. HK OFFICIALS REJECTED TAKING ANY EVACUEES WITHOUT HK DOCUMENTATION.

3. HK OFFICIALS WHO ACCOMPANIED FLIGHTS REPORTED THAT THE

OPERATION PROCEEDED SMOOTHLY WITH THE VIETNAMESE BEING GENERALLY AGREEABLE BUT FORMAL. VIETNAMESE INTERPRETERS WERE USED EVEN THOUGH MANY VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS OBVIOUSLY SPOKE FRENCH OR ENGLISH. THERE WAS SOME VIETNAMESE OBJECTION WHEN CATHAY PACIFIC, WHO RAN THE FLIGHTS, REQUIRED SECURITY CHECKS ON BAGGAGE BUT THIS ISSUE WAS FINALLY RESOLVED IN FAVOR OF CATHAY.

4. HKG ESTIMATES THAT APPROXIMATELY 1900 HK ENTRY VISAS WERE ISSUED FOR VIETNAM RESIDENTS. THIS IS UP FROM AN ORIGINAL FIGURE OF 1000 (ANY NUMBERS CONNECTED WITH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES SEEM TO GROW.) AND THERE ARE SOME 1700 STILL TO BE EVACUATED. SINCE MANY CATHAY AIRCRAFT ARE UNDERGOING MAINTENANCE IN JANUARY, HKG CURRENTLY PLANS TO EVACUATE REMAINING GROUP IN A SERIES OF ABOUT TEN FLIGHTS STARTING IN FEBRUARY.

5. COMMENT: AFTER THE FIRST TWO SUCCESSFUL FLIGHTS, HONG KONG IMMIGRATION WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE FLOODED WITH APPLICATIONS ON BEHALF OF CHOLON CHINESE MUCH TO THE DISMAY OF HK AUTHORITIES WHO ARE TRYING TO HOLD DOWN THE NUMBERS OF THIS ALREADY OVER-CROWDED CITY. HOWEVER, REGARDLESS OF WHAT THE HKG DECIDES ON VISA ISSUANCE, IT WILL BE UP TO THE VIETNAMESE TO SAY WHO WILL BE ABLE TO LEAVE. PRESENT TRENDS INDICATE THE SRV WOULD LIKE TO RID ITSELF OF ALL FOREIGNERS, ESPECIALLY CHINESE.
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